

St Mary's Catholic College

Wallasey Village, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 3LN

Inspection dates 3–4 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although significant improvements have been made in the quality of teaching, overall it remains too variable and requires further improvement.
- The quality of assessment within and across curriculum areas is inconsistent.
- The sixth form requires improvement to the curriculum because although it has considerable strengths and most students achieve well, there is too much variation in the outcomes of different courses.

The school has the following strengths

- Attainment has risen sharply over the last two years so that students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, achieve well across a wide range of subjects.
- Pastoral care is very well developed. Support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable is excellent. The Bosco Centre provides strong support for learning.
- Behaviour is good and students feel safe. One of the college's continuing strengths is the high quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Senior leaders have reacted promptly and effectively to recommendations in the last inspection report and have improved many aspects of the college's work. Staff have responded well to higher expectation and challenge. Nevertheless, the college is accurate in its self-evaluation that teaching still requires improvement.
- There is excellent and exciting teaching in some departments such as English, the performing arts, social science and physical education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons taught by 46 teachers. Several of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with students from all year groups, members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 71 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the most recent school survey of parental views and spoke to individual parents .
- They observed the college’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the college’s data on tracking students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Christine Addison	Additional inspector
Lenford White	Additional inspector
Derek Barnes	Additional inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic College is much larger than the average sized secondary school. It has two specialisms. One is for the performing arts and the other is for applied learning.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high and includes over one third of the students on roll.
- The great majority of students are of White British heritage with only a small number coming from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is well above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small proportion of Key Stage 4 students follow vocational part-time courses at the Metropolitan College.
- The college holds several awards in recognition of its work. These include the Artsmark Gold, Healthy School status and the Sportsmark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of lessons that are good or better by:
 - requiring all teachers to more precisely match learning tasks to the needs of all students
 - providing more opportunities in lessons where students are excited and engaged through problem-solving and working independently
 - ensuring that all department planning provides opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of marking and assessment by:
 - making sure that all students know how well they are doing and are aware of what they need to do to improve their learning
 - encouraging students to act upon and make improvements to their work in response to teachers' marking
 - making sure that students in all year groups know their targets and how they are going to achieve them
 - ensuring that teachers' feedback to students through marking and assessment is consistently good across all classes and that best practice is shared across all departments.
- Implement the recommendations from the sixth-form review of the curriculum to ensure that it is better suited to promote the achievement of all students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the college with attainment that is significantly below that of students nationally. During the last two years the pace of improvement has been such that students' progress has accelerated rapidly, particularly in English and mathematics. Attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2012 was just above average with students making better than expected progress in both English and mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at A*-C including English and mathematics has risen from 40% in 2010 to 60% in 2012. This is why achievement is now good.
- Past underachievement in mathematics has been overcome so that progress is accelerating beyond national expectations and is continually improving.
- Until recently, girls have achieved less well than boys but this gap has narrowed significantly so that girls are achieving well. Similarly, the gap between the achievement of all students, and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, has narrowed considerably.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive a wide range of support which enables them to make good progress and achieve well.
- Students develop good skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and literacy. National poetry day fell during the inspection and many classes spent part of the day in the library sharing their poetry with each other and learning how poems illuminate human experience.
- Students work well in teams to solve problems. Students following the applied learning courses achieve well. For example, students thrive in the atmosphere of the school's hair and beauty salon where the professional atmosphere has a positive impact on their self-confidence.
- Outcomes for students in the sixth form vary considerably. Students are most successful on AS level courses with achievement in drama, French and ICT being particularly strong.
- More students than average stay in education or training at age 16 and the retention rate for students in the sixth form is higher than average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is good and outstanding teaching in the college. Where this occurs teaching is exciting and students are totally involved in their learning. In the best lessons, learning is a true partnership between teachers and students. Probing questioning stimulates thinking and curiosity. Practical strategies and the effective use of pair and group work promote enjoyment and enable students to learn effectively. In many lessons, materials are relevant, engaging and challenging.
- Good teaching was seen during the inspection in the sixth form. However, over time teaching has not been strong enough to reduce the variation in outcomes for different students and courses.
- Students in the Bosco Centre receive additional support which enables them to achieve well. Similarly the literacy base is a well-used resource in which students are well-supported by staff.
- Where teaching needs improvement it is because lessons are too teacher-led so that they lose the attention of some students. The pace is slower and opportunities are missed to extend learning by setting different tasks for students of differing abilities. Some lessons lack direction and challenge and planning does not always extend the more able.
- As yet, not all departments are providing enough opportunities for students to improve numeracy across the curriculum and more needs to be done to encourage communication skills, particularly in mathematics and science lessons.
- There is considerable inconsistency in the usefulness and frequency of day-to-day marking. Too often marking is cursory at best and not enough advice is offered to students on how to improve their work, both in the main school and in the sixth form.

- Teachers are not making enough reference to students' targets in their planning and marking so that students are not fully aware of what their targets are and how they will reach them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students in all year groups report that they feel safe and free from all types of bullying and harassment. Students say that they are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Students, parents and most staff agree that behaviour over time is good, both in lessons and during mid-morning breaks and lunch time. On occasion, when there is weakness in teaching, there is some low-level disruption. The college deals well with any lapses in good behaviour. The number of school exclusions is low and falling each year.
- Students treat each other with respect and are generally polite to each other and adults.
- Successful strategies have ensured that attendance is steadily improving and is in line with national figures and sometimes above.
- Sixth-form students consider the pastoral care they receive to be excellent. They take full advantage of the many opportunities to contribute to their local and wider communities and value the responsibilities entrusted to them. Students have a strongly developed moral and social conscience stemming from the college ethos. Sixth-form students respect others and their differences and are united in their desire to improve the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders responded promptly and effectively to the findings of the last inspection. Leadership and management at all levels are good and have led to significant improvements in the achievement of students. Performance in mathematics has improved significantly and good provision in English has been strengthened.
- Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the college has improved the quality of teaching across the board. The focus now is on increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching using a range of strategies, including 'learning walks', staff training days and twilight training sessions. Staff have been reorganised into curriculum areas offering mutual encouragement and support. The college thus has effective professional development strategies to promote improvement in teaching and learning.
- New and robust systems of performance management and a much stronger focus on the tracking of individual students' progress in every subject and in every year group have been established. As a result, teachers are made accountable for the progress students make in their classes from the start of Year 7.
- Middle leaders have a clear view of their roles and what is expected of them. Middle managers have increased their skills in monitoring the performance of students and are setting higher expectations of what can be achieved.
- The college can exemplify exactly how the pupil premium funds are spent and show that the investment in provision for English and mathematics has raised attainment and boosted students' achievement.
- The curriculum continues to be a strength in terms of the variety and appropriateness of courses offered. The college provides a good balance of academic and vocational courses to suit the needs of different students, although plans to develop the science curriculum are still being implemented. A wide range of off-site provision broadens the range of pathways offered to better meet the needs of individual students. Students following these vocational courses achieve well. In addition, the curriculum promotes good behaviour and contributes to the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
- In the sixth form the curriculum is being reviewed in order to increase the achievement of students and to ensure that students follow courses in which they can maximise their potential

and achieve well.

- The college enjoys a good relationship with most parents who responded very positively in the most recent surveys and to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, Parent View. The great majority is pleased with what the college provides and would recommend it to others.
 - The local authority has provided strong and useful support including training for middle leaders, members of the governing body and support in ensuring that the pupil premium is invested to give maximum benefit.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - governors support the college effectively and have good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses
 - since the last inspection, governors have undertaken training to increase their skills in monitoring the work of the college and holding leaders to account
 - governors undertake their statutory duties effectively and have ensured that safeguarding requirements are fully met.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105110
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	404966

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1636
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Mossman
Headteacher	Anthony Boyle
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2010
Telephone number	0151 6397531
Fax number	0151 2014501
Email address	schooloffice@stmaryscollege.wirral.sch.uk

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